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ABSTRACT

The existing minority language situation of French Canadians in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime Provinces is examined, highlighting the historical, political, social, and educational aspects of bilingualism in Canada. Additive and subtractive forces in Canadian bilingualism and biculturalism are outlined for comparison. French first-language programs, French core and French immersion, and their effects on Canadian society are considered. Special focus is placed on culture, and particularly on the use of authentic materials in instruction, as a possible means of ensuring language retention. It is concluded that more research on the effects of programs in bilingualism and biculturalism is needed, and that it is also important to identify which federal programs promoting bilingualism and biculturalism are successful and which are not, and in what regions they are working best. A brief bibliography is included. (Author/MSE)

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CULTURE AND THE FRENCH CANADIAN: A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

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This paper will consider the existing minority language situation of French Canadians in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime provinces. Highlighted will be the historical, political, social, and educational aspects of bilingualism in Canada. It will consider French first language programs, French Core and French immersion, and their effects on Canadian Society. A special focus will be placed on the role of culture as a possible means of ensuring language retention. Finally, it will offer some directions in light of existing or promoted current 1st and 2nd language programs in Canada.

The primary goal of this paper is to describe bilingualism in Canada from a historical, political, social, and educational perspective. A second and subsidiary goal is to explain whether or not French Canadians can avert assimilation to become, culturally and linguistically, full and equal partners in the Canadian Confederation.

A Historical Perspective

The first half of Canada's European-based history was under French rule. Deep French historical roots and the existing climate so open and favorable to the enriching influences of bilingualism today are two factors which promise increasing opportunities for Canadians to further develop the bilingual character of Canada.

However, three other significant influences tend to downplay and diminish this possibility. The first factor is that Canada borders on the United States of America, whose culture and language dominate business, the media, and most areas of publication and entertainment. Its influence is world-wide and Canada, is most directly affected by its cultural and economic policies. The result is that majority language in this hemisphere is English. A second factor is the immigration rate into Canada, adding to the possibility that Canada will become multilingual and multicultural before it becomes fully bilingual and bicultural. While this will encourage and promote a multicultural country, it is important that the cultural groups be encouraged to develop their culture and language in depth so that they will not be overwhelmed by the majority language.

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The third factor is the proportional reduction of French Canadians relative to the increasing growth of Canada. The reduction in birth rate in Quebec, the high rate of assimilation in provinces in and out of Quebec, coupled with the separateness of group identities and non-direct cooperation between French Canadians and other cultural groups, create the possibility of reduction of bilingualism and biculturalism which could benefit French Canadians now and be of benefit to all cultural minorities in the long term.

A Political Perspective

Federally, there has been an increase in political will and determination in implementing bilingual programs that would serve the needs of French Canadians in their own language. Politicians at the Federal level have become increasingly conscious of the importance given to the winning of seats in Quebec in order to gain a greater majority and also to be more truly representative nationally.

As a result of these programs, Canadians are becoming more conscious of the realities of Canada and of their distinctiveness as Canadians. These effects have been particularly felt in provinces such as Ontario and New Brunswick which have large populations of French Canadians and border on Quebec. In other provinces, the changes have not been so remarkable. The additive and substractive forces given below indicate to some extent the kind of ongoing struggles that need resolution. These forces are contrasted in Chart I.

CHART I
ADDITIVE AND SUBSTRACTIVE FORCES IN CANADIAN BICULTURALISM AND BILINGUALISM

Additive Forces	Substractive Forces
1. Canada has a strong central Federal Government which has representation from French Canada and which supports official bicultural and bilingualism.	1. Many provincial governments offer little support or some resistance to official bicultural and bilingual programs.

2. The Federal Government funds and provides services in support of official biculturalism and bilingualism.	2. The tendency is for provincial governments to take advantage of federal programs, and accept less responsibility for their own minority language population.
3. There is one province in Canada which has a French Canadian majority--Quebec.	3. In light of the continued rapid assimilation rate in the other provinces, Quebec is on the defensive and is concerned about safe-guarding its own culture and language interests.
4. French is becoming more popular in English language schools. Immersion programs are in demand and core French programs in Ontario have now become compulsory.	4. Large numbers of anglophones go to Quebec each year to learn French, and they meet and converse with a population in Quebec now anxious to learn English. What the effect of these inroads in the province will be remains to be seen.
5. With more English speakers acquiring French and native speakers wishing to keep their English language, there will be more French tomorrow.	5. In most provinces except Quebec, French and English speakers continue to live primarily in a culture. Can a language not rooted in its authentic culture survive in the immersion process of English Canadian and North American culture and language?
6. French language schools exist across the nation.	6. These schools are under provincial jurisdiction.
7. Heritage, culture and language programs have been intorduced in the Toronto schools, and are encouraged elsewhere in the country where large numbers warrant.	7. There is little visible organized cooperation among Canada's aboriginal peoples, ethnic populations, and French Canadians. Unless ties are created, the situation can unfortunately become competitive and divisive.

8. The increasing immigrant population in Canada is good news in favor of minority language groups, such as the French Canadian.	8. There is a move toward the acceptance of a stronger majority language and more generally appealing, less threatening, milder form of multiculturalism.
9. Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick are bastions of biculturalism and bilingualism.	9. Populations in Western Canada and the rest of the Maritime provinces have not fully accepted the idea.
10. French Canadians at one time accounted for one-third of Canada's population.	10. While the number of French Canadians remains significant within Canada, its proportion to the entire population is decreasing. In the large North American context, they are a minority.
11. French Canada has its own radio and television networks.	11. There is really no national French Canadian newspaper. French Canadian radio and television cannot compete with English Canadian and American programming.
12. French Canada has its own writers, artists, performers, etc.	12. French Canadian music, its culture and general way of life are being shaped more and more by the predominantly English North-American lifestyle.

A Socio-Economic Perspective

Bilingualism is considered to be an asset in Canadian society, the extent depending on each province. Western Canada has for a long time felt it was alienated from the rest of Canada, particularly because Central Canada (Ontario and Quebec) has been perceived in Western Canada as receiving more political attention than other regions. While the rivalry between Western Canada and Ontario has been primarily economic, Western Canada has never really accepted bilingualism due to the political advantages which are apparent in the province of Quebec. Since Westerners already feel

alienated, they find it difficult to accept that the English speaking provinces should have to consent to the bilingualism policies designed for Quebec and supported by politicians from both Quebec and Ontario. While many Westerners recognize the need for such policies, the general mood is not favourable to the concept of nation-wide bilingualism.

The Eastern provinces, on the other hand, have appeared to be more tolerant in their expressed attitude. Perhaps this is due to the presence of a bilingual province in their midst (New Brunswick). Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island appear to have a more open attitude. In Newfoundland, there has been much resistance to the idea possibly because, like Western Canada, they appear alienated (geographically and politically) from the rest of Canada. However, there are some signs of change there as well. Everywhere, French is flourishing due in large part to the development of French language and French immersion programs, largely, promoted by such groups as Canadian Parents for French. Still, socially, resistance continues to exist and bilingualism is not easily accepted.

In Ontario, with the advent of the new Liberal Government (elected in 1986 with a large majority), French language services continue to be extended. In Quebec, with the coming to power of a separatist party in the 1970's, and its defeat in the 1970's, the situation has changed considerably. While some parts of the population are very much concerned with the protection of the French language, its general population is now very eager to learn English. It appears that given a choice between cultural and linguistic identity and economic prosperity, many are now choosing the latter option (L'Allier 1986).

A Perspective On Education

The demand for French (primarily French language schools and French immersion programs) continues to be a high priority among Canadians. In Ontario and in many other parts of the country French language schools are granted wherever the numbers warrant, and the pressure for French immersion by English speaking parents continues to be very strong. Also, there have been efforts to improve the core French curriculum in English language schools. The success of immersion programs has increased the number of students interested in participating in these programs. However, the lack of qualified teachers and the realization that acquiring a second language takes an extended period of time have prompted researches, parents and educators to search for alternatives. There have been renewed

efforts to improve the core French curriculum in English language schools in light of the findings presently available from French immersion programs. The initiatives appear to be meeting with some success. Whether these will complement or replace existing immersion programs remains to be seen. Still, research findings relative to Canadian immersion programs (Lapkin and Swain, 1982) are consistent with what is known about language acquisition: the mode of acquisition and amount of time spent in acquiring a second language remain crucial determinants of competency.

Today, the situation is much different than it was at the turn of the century when Bill 17, a law requiring all citizens in Ontario to be educated in English, was first enforced to be later revoked. Canada is now (especially with the new Charter of Rights) officially bilingual, French and English.

In Toronto, however, multiculturalism is the key word, not bilingualism. Recently, the Toronto School Board initiated a series of programs in which heritage languages can be taught to children whose native language is not English or French. There has been some debate on the issue, but there has also been considerable enthusiasm and support for this venture. In Western Canada, language heritage programs exist and many ethnic Canadians, who might not have supported official bilingualism and biculturalism, feel differently about this venture since they come from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

In Quebec, Northern Ontario, and New Brunswick, the debate is still over bilingualism, but in Toronto, Western and most of Atlantic Canada the concern is as much with multicultural education and heritage languages as it is with bilingualism. In Newfoundland, there also exists a different alienation: some residents identify more with the U.S. and others with European countries.

In March of 1987, there was a Constitutional Conference on Aboriginal rights which ended in a stalemate between the Federal and most Provincial Governments with respect to three of the Western Provinces. The interesting aspect of these negotiations is that Quebec, not signatory to the Constitution, could have made a difference. The impass which was reached is a "turning point", with many possible different directions.

The Meech Lake Accord which recognized Quebec as a distinct society and brought it into the Canadian Constitution provided a momentum that could later give greater status to the Aboriginal peoples. Interestingly enough, the Meech Lake Accord was criticized by the native leaders for

giving too much to Quebec and not enough to them. It appears that there is a long way to go before cooperation can bridge the differences and bring the diverse cultural groups together.

The end result is that there remains a concerted effort to expose all students to the French language in school and, where the numbers warrant, to have students strengthen develop their first language. It is recognized that one's first language should be encouraged and developed along the lines of the other two official languages. However, although the ideals have been clearly expressed, reality often falls far short. Finding the money for these programs in such a large country where the population is so dispersed, and the experts to meet the needs whenever they are expressed are two problems which in themselves are not easily resolved.

The Culture and Language Perspective

It has become increasingly clear that culture as well as context are essential for language acquisition purposes. In Canada, the North American culture pervades most contexts in which language is naturally acquired. However, because of the clustering of large communities with different cultural backgrounds (including the larger French Canadian popularity) the first language is often nourished and encouraged to develop due largely to the preservation of institutions which generate activities which are rooted in a culture more or less authentic to the language which is being spoken.

Speech is but one aspect of language, developed along socially agreed-upon symbols (Bryen, 1982). Luria (1976) states that non-verbal language precedes speech, and if we analyze the early stages of language development (Bryen, 1982; Manolson, 1983), we recognize that language is intricately linked with established routines and contextually learned behaviors (Wardhaugh, 1976). A growing child learns not only what to say, but also where, when, how, and why to say it. The information in context dictates the socially agreed-upon interpretation of these variables, and culture, in addition to context, needs to be considered in the language acquisition process. As language is more than speech, culture is more than language (Hall, 1966, 1973).

Culture, then from this perspective, is an essential factor in the understanding of the language acquisition process. It can be described as "an infrastructure, the interactional behavior through which people lock themselves into the patterns which they have created" (Gearing, 1984, p. 39).

Culture can therefore be defined as a conditioned and organized system of perceptions and behaviors.

Research was carried out (Duquette, 1985; Duquette, Dunnett, & Papalia, 1987) to find out whether or not the increased use of authentic language materials (materials produced by native speakers for native speakers -- Begin, 1982) in a kindergarten classroom had an effect on cultural identification and language production, and to explain the findings through background ethnographic analyses of classroom structures and routines.

Quantitative findings indicated a significant difference in the language production of the experimental group with the control group. The experimental group increased in cultural identification, language, structure, and vocabulary.

Ethnographic findings demonstrated that:

1) The pupils spoke English, the majority language, unless they were in the presence of the teacher who invited them to speak French or they had to contend with French concepts (the pragmatic implication was that the pupils spoke English unless they were required to speak French).

2) Early on, the children were unfamiliar with authentic materials and were uncertain discussing them. However, this changed with time.

3) Given longer term exposure, pupils responded better to French content, speaking more and laughing at humorous situations, confirming high involvement with the materials.

It was therefore determined that authentic materials provided pupils with more background information as to the French Canadian way of life, the way native speakers use the French language, facilitating language acquisition and contributing to an increase in language production in terms of structure and vocabulary.

Perhaps the most interesting insight into the effects of this experiment occurred when the teacher noted that pupils in the experimental class spoke mostly French when discussing authentic French programs while in the control group, the pupils appeared to switch more often to English when discussing French translations of English programs. This incidental

observation raises the issue of cognitive processing of language. It also brings forward the issue of whether or not dissimilar, concept- driven processing of a first language from a second language at a cultural level not only affects encoding, but also the retention and recall of that language.

With the exception of the Province of Quebec and other culturally alive first language homes and communities across the country, the English and North American culture pervades the society. In the area where the above research was carried out, the pupils were unfamiliar with authentic materials. Those whose language appears to survive most often come from homes where they think, live, and behave in French, and continue to have strong links with a French community. Since cultural rearing and self- identity are intricately related in modelling perceptions and shaping behavior generally and language behavior specifically (Linton, 1977), it is understandable that manipulating French concepts in French, for instance, will be much more natural to one who has the background culture than to one who does not. The other's inclination will, of course, be to manipulate the concepts in English, and the preference will increase for English concepts as these will be more familiar and easier to manipulate in that language.

In Canada, French language schools, churches, and community organizations attempt to keep the bicultural/bilingual flame alive. The Federal Government has provided funding and opportunities, but provincial governments are slow to change and their damper is "bone chilling" to the French Canadian minority language population because of the influence the provinces have over cultural and educational affairs. One strong indication of the trend in our society is that although children with special needs in most provinces are promised special education services, language assessment and development services to children with special needs from minority language homes are not available. Such services are still provided only in English.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important that the Canadian government and people analyze and understand the kind of country being built. A truly bicultural/bilingual Canadian temperament may well enhance the multicultural, multifaceted character of the nation. This analysis must be conducted in light of the historical, political, socio-economic, educational and cultural language perspectives which affect it.

More research needs to be encouraged on the effects of programs in bilingualism and multiculturalism. Which federal programs promoting bilingualism and multiculturalism are actually working and which are not? How successful are these programs in different areas of the country?

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